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Penn State Wiki: An Implementation Guide

Welcome! This guide has been prepared as a set of open recommendations for a university–supported wiki project and as an educational reference explaining benefits of wiki technology at Penn State.

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http://www.clubs.psu.edu/up/usg/resources/wiki

Figure 1: Penn State Wiki logo symbolizing unique connections between diverse topics.

Abstract: A wiki is online collaborative software consisting of a collection of articles editable by any user. This report explains a wiki, reports on wiki projects in existence, defines impact areas for Penn State, describes editing principles, outlines moderation techniques and recommended structure, outlines technical requirements, addresses legal concerns, and lists promotional efforts to date.

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Appendix A: Lexicon of Terms is reading companion to referenced companies and names, Wikipedia terminology, Penn State abbreviations, technical terminology, and legal terminology.

Appendix B: Formal USG & CCSG Request for the Penn State Wiki is legislation passed by USG referenced in Subsection 1.3.

Appendix C: Letters of Communication are project letters sent on behalf of USG as described in Subsection 1.3.

Appendix D: Example of University SPAM–like Email is supporting documentation for Sub-subsection 2.1.1.

Appendix E: Class Template Mock-ups are examples of initial wiki pages for all of Penn State's classes as described in Subsection 2.3.

Appendix F: University Faculty Senate Textbook Report is supporting documentation for Subsection 2.4.

Appendix G: Articles Relating To Wikitorials contains an wiki article no longer available from the *L.A. Times*, referenced in Subsection 2.6.

Appendix H: *The Councillor* Wiki Cover Article is included as a publication of Penn State, referenced in Sub-subsection 7.1.2.

Appendix I: Promotional Poster is a draft design of a promotional poster described in Sub-subsection 7.1.3.

1 Background Information

> When I took office, only high energy physicists had ever heard of what is called the Worldwide Web – when I took office, January of 1993, only high energy physicists had heard of it. Now even my cat has its own Web page. —Former President Bill Clinton in 1996 speaking about classroom internet technology initiatives. [?]

Wiki[1] is a new communication concept invented by Ward Cunningham in 1995.[1] Cunningham's conception of wiki is online software containing a collection of text articles with any article editable in real–time by any user. All changes including addition, removal, and/or alteration of text are saved without peer review and are instantly visible to the next reader. While a counterintuitive concept, wikis have produced high–quality articles by a community of contributors acting in good faith.[?] The most developed wiki software packages feature discussion pages, revision–by–revision article histories, user personal pages, article searching, moderation tools for abusive users, and other features to support a continually–growing community of editors.

The premise of how wikis work is described at length in James Surowiecki's book 'The Wisdom of Crowds'; Surowiecki argues that group–based decisions have statistically higher accuracy than individual judgments, including those by experts.[3] Each group member has unique factual information of a subject in addition to randomized error, however the collection of all viewpoints removes errors and only factual information remains. In the context of article editing, disputed text *quick*ly changes but agreeable statements do not.

1.0.1 Crowd Intelligence Example: Surowiecki details the example of a contest where participants estimate the number of jellybeans in a jar. Counterintutively the crowd average is much more likely to be closer to the actual number of jellybeans than any individual estimation. The greater the size of the crowd, the more likely the group result

[1] The word *wiki* (pronounced *wick-ee*) also means *quick* in Hawaiian.

is to be closer to the actual count. Additionally, announcement of extra information, such as warnings to overcompensate, biases the overall group result. The example illustrates the importance of each participant reaching his/her conclusion completely independantly.

Wikis have increased in popularity over the past decade and are now entering into mainstream use by startup commercial companies, project management groups, and in higher education.

1.1 Wikimedia Foundation

> "Imagine a world in which every single person is given free access to the sum of all human knowledge. That's what we're doing." —Jimbo Wales, CEO of The Wikimedia Foundation [5]

The Wikimedia Foundation (Figure 2) is a non–profit organization that operates the most popular wiki project to date: Wikipedia.[2][?] Wikipedia, much like an encyclo*pedia*, objectively covers public–knowledge topics in 96 world languages. Wikipedia's goal is to become a freely–available reference of Encyclopædia Britannica's quality or better with more comprehensive subject coverage than any encyclopedia: since the 2001 introduction of Wikipedia, 850,000 English articles have been contributed by the public in contrast to 120,000 by Britannica experts. A recent study by Nature Magazine has shown that Wikipedia is contains only a slight higher error rate than Britannica for scientific articles. [?] [?]

http://www.nature.com/news/2005/051212/full/438900a.html

Wikipedia articles are presented as factual, although as a work in progress not every statement is valid. This, Wikipedia is generally not accepted as an academic reference; however, the best articles have external links to peer–reviewed and verified articles enabling the reader to pursue research–quality references. Articles do present to readers succinct introductions and coverage for a given topic. The number of edits per page has a general

[2]The English edition of Wikipedia averaged 500,000 visits per day in November of 2005. [?]

correlation to overall article quality. Figure 3 gives a quantifible means of measuring overall participation and sustainability for any wiki project.

Figure 2: From left to right: Wikimedia Foundation, Wikipedia, and Wikinews logos.

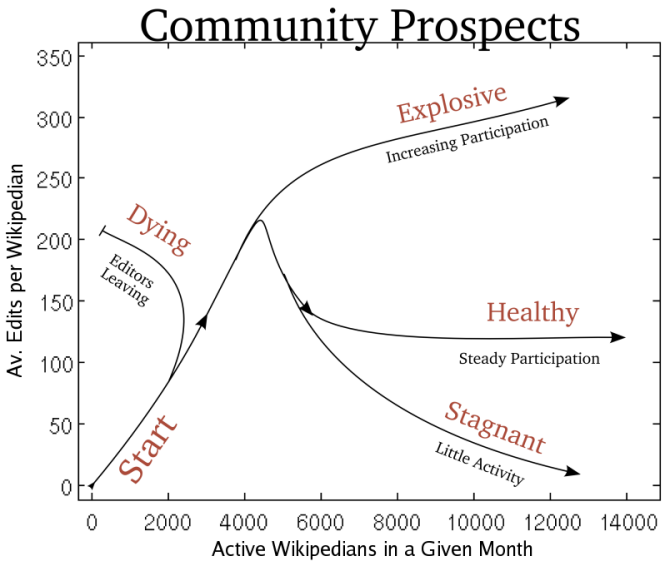

Figure 3: General guide for sustainability of wiki projects. Arrows indicate time progression. Wikipedia follows the 'healthy' trendline: the average number of edits/month per Wikipedian has stabilized at 115, while maintaining a positive influx of new editors to help improve quality and add content. An active Wikipedian is defined as an English edition editor with at least 5 edits per month; anonymous edits are not counted. Data sampled 15–December–2005 [?]

Wiki software does not control how contributors interact, necessitating the need for editing rules and guidelines. Mandating that all articles maintain a Neutral Point of View (NPOV) is well–established means of preventing "edit wars" and non–informative content.[?]

Furthermore, NPOV is the framework for discussion on controversial topics: users document majority and minority views fairly rather than advocate a position, allowing new readers to reach well–informed, objective judgments.

Promoting awareness of and enforcing NPOV is 'absolute and non-negotiable' for the Wikipedia Project, a firmly–grounded community principle and executive decision of Wales. Quality improvement of anonymous malicious edits and the resolution of edit wars have high–priority status: one study found that the mean time to reversion of vandalism was two minutes.[4] Users quickly realize that trying to control the content on a page through repeated edit is rudundent, thus discouraging edit wars. Article stability is ultimately reached by having individuals recognize their own biases. The Wikipedia community, which includes 600 active moderators, is pro–active against abusive users while remaining welcoming and open to reasoned changes.

1.1.1 Example: Donald Rumsfeld, a controversial political figure over his involvement in the Iraq War, has been the subject of intense critism and saterical works. Nevertheless, the biograph article on Rumsfeld contains links and catagorization to related wiki articles, numerous pictures of him in public life, and highly informative career descriptions and personal biography *without partisan commentary.* The article on the Iraq War and the events of 11–September–2001 follow a similar format, although the article on President George W. Bush has been temporarely protected against editing. Changes to the main article can still be proposed and discussed by any member of the public.

1.1.2 Wikinews is based on similar principles to Wikipedia's but with a focus on current events rather than historic record.[6] Stories are created and edited by anyone interested in sharing first–hand knowledge. Citizen–based diversification offers an alternative to mainstream media outlets in objectivity, international coverage, and lack of reporter commentary.

For example a Wikinews initial story was created within 45 minutes of the 7–July–05 London train bombings. The story was completed with original photos, news references, hotline information, and other resources within hours of the incidents.[**?**][**?**] A real–time chat system integrated into the browser was used to coordinate the actions of multiple citizen reporters.[2]

While it is beyond the scope of this report, a news–based wiki for stories and events in University Park and State College, PA, is fertile ground for future project growth.

1.2 University Wikis

The principles of wiki are founded on peer–editing, making wikis an attractive pedagogical tool.[] Papers or other assignments may be posted on a wiki page to be used collaboratively for a grade by students. Students are not corrected by instructors, but are required to substantiate viewpoints or positions to fellow peers, enhancing classroom debate.

Freshmen [composition classes] at Penn State (ENGL 15) and some sections of [professional writing] (ENGL 202) have adopted wiki technology on a trial basis since Fall 2005. In support of this technology, the College of Liberal Arts operates a 'Wiki Farm', a common hosting space for multiple classroom and personal wikis.[]

[`http://mdlwiki.cse.psu.edu/twiki/bin/view/TWiki/WebHome`]

1.2.1 General–purpose Wikis in education are uncommon; most are for departmental or research–specific projects. Only a handful of schools have adopted wikis for student use, allowing Penn State to establish national precedent in higher education. Figure 4 lists the most popular wikis associated with a college or university.

Penn State has one of the highest national enrollment rates giving it a considerably larger potential community base than the above schools. [This is good because] The number of edits per page is the most crucial measure of success: higher–quality articles that will attract

more visitors with the potential to add content, thus creating a positive feedback loop of overall growth. Because of it's large user base, Wikipedia has grown nearly exponentially, and a wiki project at Penn State is subject to the same growth model. [3]

1.3 Penn State Wiki

Undergraduate Student Government (USG) Academic Assembly introduced and passed `Joint Resolution 01: Penn State Wiki` requesting the installation and maintenance of a university–supported wiki. USG Senate, Executive Branch, and the Council of Common-

[3] [Note on exp. growth]

Owner and Domain	Views	Open	Articles	E/Page	V/Edit	Started
Wikimedia Foundation en.wikipedia.org	Millions	Y	856,000	11.2	N/A	Jan–2001
Williams Students Online wso.williams.edu	326k	N	273	3.4	63	May–2005
Keith Twombley www.rofflehaus.com	281k	Y	1,886	2.8	18	July–2005
Case Western Reserve U. wiki.case.edu	233k	N	482	2.0	50	June–2005
Washington State U. wiki.wsu.edu	124k	N	87	2.5	33	Aug–2005
Xander Quine oberwiki.net	115k	Y	559	1.7	42	Aug–2004

Figure 4: Usage statistics for university–related wiki projects with over 100,000 page views. 'Views' denotes total page views, 'Open' denotes publicly editable status, 'Articles' are substantive pages, 'E/Page' denotes average edits per page, and 'V/Edit' denotes average visits per edit. Rofflehaus discusses Iowa State University; Oberwiki discusses Oberlin College. Wikipedia is shown for comparison. (Data sampled 4–December–2005). See 2.1.5 for a note on Williams Students Online.

wealth Student Governments have affirmed the administration request with overwhelming support. (Appendix A)

Body	Aye	Nay	Abstain	Date
36th Academic Assembly	10	2	0	3–October–2005
Senate Internal Affairs	7	0	0	24–October–2005
36th Senate	23	4	0	24–October–2005
USG President		Approved		31–October–2005
CCSG	31	2	0	[Verify this]
CCSG President		Approved		[Find this date]

Figure 5: Vote totals for USG.

This recommendation report is the accompanying document outlining the formal request of the Penn State Wiki ('**W**iki').

Organization	Addressed to:	Description	Date
Division of Student Affairs	P. Burlingame	Reconsideration	15–Oct–2005
University Relations	D. Stanfield	Reconsideration	11–Jan–2006
Information Technology Services	K. Morooney	Report Submission	10–January–2006
Wikimedia Foundation	J. Wales	Report Submission	10–January–2006
University Faculty Senate	L. Coraor	Faculty Support	10–January–2006
Student Organizations	Presidents	Project Introduction	10–January–2006
Student Advocacy Groups	Presidents	Student Advocacy Groups	10–January–2006
The Daily Collegian	Penn State Student Body	Letter to the Editor	10–January–2006

Figure 6: Listing of communication letters contained in Appendix B.

2 University Impact

The Wiki may be used in a variety of contexts, with the primary benefit of being modular and flexible to design changes. We have defined and explored several impact areas beneficial

to student life as well as the operation of the university.

2.1 New Communication Model

Penn State is becoming increasingly reliant on electronic telecommunication and the Wiki is the latest representation of this trend. Existing telephone, email, and instant messaging systems are primarily designed for one–to–one communication; wiki design is intended to coordinate the needs of large numbers of individuals in an efficient and organized manner while maintaining active user participation. Additionally, a recorded public record of discussion exists for future reference by historians or for specialized projects. A listing of popular communication media is given in Figure 7.

Chat clients, blogs, and message boards enable message broadcast from individuals to larger groups. The potentially large number of simulatenous speakers often causes the reader incovenience from trying to locate specific information across numerous postings. The topic–centric nature of wikis give lucid easy–to–navigate organization compared to a individual postings featured in a message board or blogging system. Penn State has a vested interest in effective corporate communication, a need that can be better met though diversification of communication media.

2.1.1 Example of Communication Strain: SPAM-like email from the University. (Appendix C)

2.1.2 Viewpoint Incorporation denotes input from multiple individuals, with an emphasis on collaborative rather than destructive editing. All substantiated sides of an argument or description may be represented in a neutral and informative manner. We assert that students will find the Wiki to be very an attractive means of input because information is republished and read by the rest of the community: collaboration yields awareness yields action.

2.1.3 Information Centralization of public documents has limited existance at Penn State. With the exception of the Course Management System (CMS, a.k.a. 'ANGEL') and main web page, search engines are a requirement to locate information across diverse web pages.[4] Penn State's web system has grown in a haphazard fashion, with little consistency of style, content quality, and update frequency. Searching for information has recently risen to the number two internet activity on the internet.[]

The Wiki will serve as an information centralization point where a particular topic will be an interface to multiple diverse sources based on popularity and source relevance. All pages within the Wiki will have standardized formatting emphasizing the value of content rather than appearance. Pages within the wiki may be easily separated into sub-pages, disambiguation pages, or renamed as needed.

2.1.4 Topic Relevancy of pages on Wiki must be kept to Penn State. Off–topic pages quickly create clutter in the article space, and generally are not expected to hold the interest of students.

[4]Penn State owns and operates a Google search appliance. The use of search engines has recently risen to the number two activity on the internet.[]

Information Channels	One to:	Many to:
One	In person Letters* Email* Chat Clients Phone & Video*	Protests Petitions* Surveys*
Many	Letters* & Books* Newspapers* Web Pages* Email Lists Blogging*	Public Debates Online Forums* **Wikis***

Figure 7: General classification of new and traditional communication media. 'One' denotes individuals or small groups; 'Many' denotes large groups. Items with an astreck generally retain a record of the communication.

Figure 8: The Google search appliance, used to index Penn State web pages.

2.1.5 Relevancy Example: The Williams Students Online Wiki (Figure 4) has a high page view count, but has a limited number of articles and high views per edit. Williams Students Online is an independant student–run organization of Williams University providing web services to the student body. A review of their wiki pages shows that many articles are off–topic to the university and are intended for amusement (*e.g.,* 'pranks involving rooms'). While highly viewed, the wiki has limited use as a productive communication tool.

[Exception to user pages]

Pages without relevancy to Penn State will be subject to immediate removal by wiki moderators.

2.1.6 Commonwealth Locations should not be excluded from Wiki participation. Wikipedia is actually a conglomeration of wikis, separated by language edition. Articles that exist in multiple languages are interlinked to create an appearance of a single unified wiki. We recommend that Penn State, as one university geographically dispersed, follow a similar model with commonwealth location replacing specific language.

Each commonwealth Wiki will have autonomy from the University Park Wiki, but users will be able to edit any Wiki of their choice.

For example, the article on 'campus expansion' will vary according to location: separation

of Wikis will create a logical break. Additionally, locally–hosted wikis are advantageous in case of network failure between locations.

2.2 Student Organizations

The number of Student Organizations at University Park is formidable at 735 student organizations registered with the Division of Student Affairs.[] Finding up–to–date information about events, meeting schedules, or even officer contact information is a difficult prospect as a non–member. Student organizations are eligible for university–hosted web space for announcements, but the large majority of websites are under–developed due to difficulty in finding effective webmasters. A substantial knowledge of HTML and familiarity with computer access systems is required, limiting the number of people able to update a organization web page.

CMS features tools for student groups but is designed to be used *by* the organization rather than to *describe* the organization to readers. The Wiki is not intended to replace CMS, but rather provide another layer of communication between all interested parties.

[Organizational Memory]

Appendix B contains a letter addressed to all presidents detailing suggested organizational uses of the Wiki.

I have gathered the titles and contact information of all University Park organizations for creation of initial pages as a template for article growth (Appendix D). Additionally I have authored computer scripting to systematically upload pages upon project implementation.

2.2.1 Student Surveys are scientific and objective but are costly and burdensome to participants. The same student concerns with explanations may be reflected by the posting of a new wiki page.

2.3 Class Descriptions

The most difficult decisions are ones that are based on insufficient information. Students across all commonwealth locations are required to register for classes based on terse descriptions from the University Registrar, experiences from friends or colleagues, and their own academic interests. The Wiki will allow better–informed decisions using the last two class–selection criteria. While some students may use the additional information to 'take the path of least resistance' through academic programs, others will choose to utilize the Wiki to enhance their education. We believe the majority of students will choose the latter, but the university maintains responsibility to ensure all degree programs are academically challenging.

I have taken a data snapshot of course offerings from the Office of the Registrar for creation of wiki pages for each of the universities approximately 13,000 classes. Each page follows a standard template, including interlinking to other departmental class pages. (Appendix D)

2.3.1 Teaching Faculty are in a unique position, as they must balance needs of the students with presentation of course material. While we can not speak for the faculty–at–large, we suggest that innovative faculty will use the Wiki as a feedback mechanism for course improvement. As faculty will also be allowed to edit articles, they may choose to become an active participant to address course concerns as they arise. With user authentication, faculty members can contact students directly to speak privately if necessary. **All content on the Wiki will be clearly labeled as non–authoritative**, so our expectation is that faculty will not have strong objection to the presence of this technology.

2.3.2 Personnel Descriptions USG has student representation in University Faculty Senate, the administrative body for all academic policies, creating a close communication link to address faculty hesitations.[]

2.4 Textbook Exchange

While the Penn State Bookstore has declined to offer a mechanism for direct textbook exchange between students, they remain a commercial business in partnership with Barnes and Noble. Wiki is fully able to support a direct textbook exchange program, *caveat emptor* [buyer beware], using a 'Buy/Sell' link from each class page to a dedicated wiki book page for the class.

USG has attempted direct book exchange projects, but have been unsuccessful due to lack of project support. With information centralization, students have higher incentive and opportunity to use the Wiki book exchange feature. The high price of textbooks is a well–identified problem by students and course administrators.

2.4.1 Example: The Penn State Bookstore (and competitors) gives Joe 50% of the $100 original retail price of his used chemistry book for buyback. The Bookstore will then sell the used book to Susan for 75% the original retail price, creating a 50% profit margin.[5] (Appendix E)

Using the Wiki, Joe can post that he is selling his chemistry textbook from last semester using a link from the class page. While Joe can set any price he cares, his best opportunity to sell the book will be at a price higher than the bookstore would have given him, but lower than the price of a new/used book, *i.e.* 50-75% of the original price. Susan, seeing the posting, then purchases the book directly from Joe at a more competitive price than the Bookstore offers. Both students remain free to use the services of the Bookstore.

2.5 Peer Advising

To supplement academic advising, the wiki will allow senior students to pass on advice and experiences to underclassmen for them to have the best experience possible. Academic

[5] In this example, the bookstore profited $25 for investing $50.

advisors may choose to use Wiki as a professional resource to keep abreast of university changes and changing advising needs of students.

USG will assist in setting up and maintaining portals on a per–major basis, and provide feedback on departmental resources.

2.6 Wiki & Current Events

During the summer of 2005, the *Los Angeles Times* published an editorial entitled 'War and Consequences' with a link at the bottom to 'wiki this editorial' (Appendix F). Despite initial success, the resulting 'wikitorial' project was terminated due to severe vandalism; the wiki was editable by the public–at–large, and the *Times* did not have the ability to fend off abusive users.

We do not anticipate the same problems as the *Times* experienced, and believe wikitorials offer a powerful means of promotion and education of Wiki and issues worthy of public discussion. All news agencies, including *The Collegian*, are free to republish wikitorials created within Wiki, as well as to give reference numbers to individual articles for reader commentary in the Wiki.

2.7 Public Viewership

To provide a information resource to the general public, prospective students, and public policy officials, we request the Wiki to be readable by the public–at–large. Very few wikis are closed from the general public, unless used to share sensitive information.

3 Wiki Principles

[This section to be used to describe the underpinnings of a successful wiki project] [Assume Good Faith]

3.1 Non–Authoritative

3.2 Non–Censorship

University Non–censorship, as long as articles relate to Penn State. (User pages OK)

3.3 Neutral Point of View

3.4 Style Guidelines

3.5 Compromise and Consensus

4 Moderation Committee

To assume that all contributors will remain neutral in constructive editing is idealistic, necessitating the use of project moderators. The role of moderators is to prevent and diffuse problems as they occur, before the problem expands. USG recommends the appointment of three types of moderators, as shown in Figure 9.

4.1 Sensitive Issues

4.2 Role and Appointment

4.2.1 Decision of Wiki Policies

4.3 Delegated Responsibilities

[Wiki policy]

4.4 Moderation Techniques

4.4.1 Self-healing

4.4.2 User Banning

4.4.3 Page Locking

4.4.4 Report this Page/User

4.5 Judicial Affairs

The Office of Judicial Affairs has historically been involved involved only in severe infractions of university policy.[6] Policy AD20: 'Computer and Network Security and Policy' as well as Policy AD42: 'Statement on Nondiscrimination and Harassment' and related policies remain in full effect.[]

Only statements by a student that would jeopardize his/her standing as a member of the university community would need be referred to Judicial Affairs; such incidents are handled exactingly and expeditiously, with the possible involvement of law enforcement agencies.

[6] The Office of Judicial Affairs is within the Division of Student Affairs; Office of Human Resources handles incidents involving university employees.

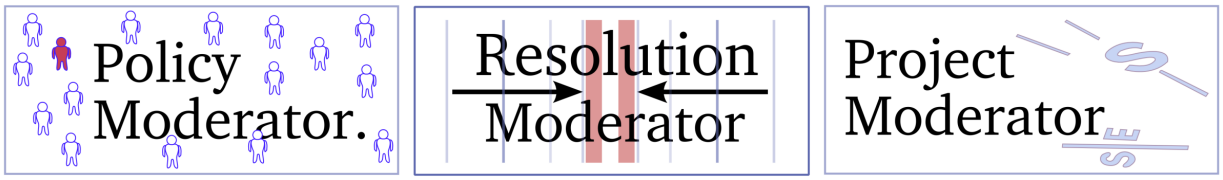

Figure 9: Graphic labels for moderators with responsibility to enforce policies and reprimand abusive users (left), coordinate discussion on sensitive issues and diffuse group tensions (center), and implement policy changes and plan long–term growth (right).

As incidents of this nature are infrequent (e.g. racial intimidation, defamatory statements, and death threats), the Judicial Affairs faces only slight workload increase. Given a strong university stand, **individuals will be more cogent of due consequence for aggressive action.**

5 Technical Recommendations

Information Technology Services (ITS) is the most versatile agency to address technical concerns and install/maintain a wiki software package. While software packages differ in features and structure, the single most important features are ease of use, the presence of history and talk pages, and authentication using a unique public identifier. Other desirable features are described below.

5.1 Wiki Software Package

Features Needed

User Pages

Google Maps

Handicap Access

5.2 Authentication

SPAM

(WebAccess) Mandatory

Public Visibility of all actions

5.3 Project Communication

5.3.1 Project Announcements To keep participants well–informed of project announcements, official channels of communication will need to be established. Listserv and non–wiki project page...

5.3.2 Instant Messaging Jabber chat client, possibly hosted 'live' though a web browser

5.3.3 User Talk Pages Most wikis support the concept of a user page, a standard wiki page dedicated as personal space useful for communication. Wikipedia users rely on personal pages to coordinate projects and resolve conflicts, decreasing the need for contact outside of the wiki.

5.3.4 Public Meetings Wiki Group

6 Legal Liability

Disclaimer: This document is not a professional legal opinion, and no warranty whatsoever is made to the accuracy, validity, or completeness of the following statements. Consult a licensed law professional for legal consultation, as the author or University will not be held accountable for legal consequence in any capacity. Casual readers my continue to the next section. The phrase 'University' is taken to mean The Pennsylvania State University.

6.1 Opening Comments

> Take care of yourself, and each other. —Jerry Springer, Host of the Jerry Springer Show

The ability of users to correct or report information that is unfairly biased, defamatory, or obscene is a first layer of defense to prevent widespread distribution of harmful materials. The ability of moderators to mediate discussion, hide content, lock pages, and suspend users is a second layer of defense to prevent problem escalation. However, the Wiki follows a reactive security model rather than filtered approved–posting; incidents may arise requiring formal legal proceedings and University sanction. Legal threats posted directly on the Wiki are not acceptable

The freedom of speech is one of the most valuable constitutional rights—a right that always needs to be balanced against the infliction of harm on another person. United States law provides a civilized code–of–conduct that every American is expected to abide by regardless of the discussion medium. The Wiki is thus considered a public forum supported but not endorsed by the University.[] While internal project controls will mitigate the frequency and severity of content problems, redress of severe problems is always possible through legal proceedings. My hope is that proceedings will be unnecessary as all participants will be more than reasonable and respectful.

6.2 University Liability

While lawsuits against the University are a constitutionally–guaranteed right, the University will be able to maintain an advantageous defensive position in a court of law. The University is responsible for the content it officially publishes or allows on campus networks including digital copyright infringement, personal web pages, and private computers on the campus network. However, US law absolves University liability while simultaneously providing 'good–Samaritan' protections to aid in defense against abusive users.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 explicitly exempts internet service providers (ISPs) from liability from actions of third–party users of the service. Penn State qualifies under this statute as an information 'common carrier' recognized by the Federal Communications

Commission.[7]

Section 230(c)(1) of the Communications Decency Act (CDA, Title V of the Telecommunication Act) reads as follows:

> No provider or user of an interactive computer service shall be treated as the publisher or speaker of any information provided by another information content provider.

Within the scope of this proposal, the University is defined as the 'interactive computer service' provider and Wiki editors are the 'information content providers'. Additionally, editors who post verbatim the messages of others are granted federal CDA §230 protection although in California the interpretation of CDA §230 is pending.[] Also note that portions of the Communications Decency Act were ruled unconstitutional by the US Supreme Court in 1997, but §230 stands and has been upheld by federal jurists with reaffirmation by Congress.[][][][][][]

Barrett v. Rosenthal, California Supreme Court Case S122953.

Zeran v. America Online, Inc., 129 F.3d 327 (4th Cir. 1997)

Ben Ezra, Weinstein & Co. v. America Online, Inc., 206 F.3d 980 (10th Cir. 2000)

Green v. America Online, Inc., 318 F.3d 465 (3d Cir. 2003)

Batzel v. Smith, 333 F.3d 1018 (9th Cir. 2003)

Stipulations of the CDA are non–protection from federal liability including infringement of intellectual property and the requirement of university non–endorsement of all content. Due diligence in reviewing content is generally not required by law but remains in the best interest of the University: the protection of intellectual property (*i.e.,* copyrights) presents a unique circumstance (Sec. 6.5).

Per §230, the University is able to remove *any* content it deems objectionable without legal consequence. In recognition of the value of open communication lines 23-25 of the USG

[7] Other possible ISP classifications are 'Information Service' or 'Enhanced Service'.

JR-01 specifically request that the University only remove content in violation of existing Wiki policies. Restated, the University is advised against selectively removing content seen as inconvenient or potentially embarrassing.

The specific legal protections afforded to the university do not extend to individual participants; individual lawsuits may exist on top of University–imposed sanctions for severe incidents.

6.2.1 Negligent entrustment

> Certainly "negligent entrustment of a chattel" is not a plausible description of a requirement that service providers investigate their customer's activities and protect strangers from harm. —Circuit Judge Frank Easterbrook, US Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals, in Doe v. GTE Corp. No. 02-4323 (2003) []

6.3 University Non-endorsement

For legal protection of the University, all employees who choose to contribute to the Wiki must act in a non–official capacity. Wikis are fundamentally anti–credentialist, so this requirement is beneficial to the equalization of all viewpoints. We strongly recommended the Wiki be officially controlled only by the appointment/removal of moderators and removal of content in violation of University policy.

University–hosted personal web pages are already covered under a similar disclaimer, creating precedent for the Wiki project. The university has historically been able to respond *and recover* from severe incidents.[8]

[8] A primary example is the 1989 pre–internet statement transmittal of James Whitehead, entitled 'Why should one kill Homosexuals?', over University networks. A copy of this statement has not been included in this report, but is available upon request.

6.4 Defamatory Statements

> "I still believe in free expression, what I want is accountability."
> —John Seigenthaler, Founder of the First Amendment Center

On 29–November–2005 Seigenthaler published an editorial in *USA Today* describing how strongly libelous information posted by an anonymous poster remained present in his Wikipedia biography for four months before being noticed/corrected. The page content was also redistributed to third parties, reaching an unknown number of viewers. The identity of the poster has been with withheld by the internet service provider; Seigenthaler has not pursued a court subpoena or lawsuit. [Story updates]

The incident, while infrequent in light of 856,000 maintained articles, has raised questions of the credibility and value of the Wikipedia project. Many of the same concerns have carried over to the Penn State Wiki; the largest difference between the projects is lack of anonymity and increased accountability of the latter.

[Full record for Court Proceedings]

6.4.1 Supreme Court Rulings Truth in US Law is an absolute defense to defamation lawsuits, a long–standing legal principle. When statement validity cannot be established, certain situations are afforded 'protected privilege' status by rulings of the Supreme Court. Labeling of all content as 'opinion only' is not sufficient for legal protection.

`New York Times Company v. Sullivan, 376 U.S. 254 (1964)`

This case established the New York Times test

Actual Malice

Public officials mentality, Mens rea = guilty mind

`Gertz v. Robert Welch, Inc., 418 U.S. 323 (1974)`

Private citizen protections.

Milkovich v. Lorain Journal Co. (No. 89-645) (1990)

This case established that labeling of defamatory content as 'opinion only' is ineligible for first amendment protection rights. The reputation damage caused by the factual nature of 'opinion only' statements supersedes the author's right to publish the defamatory content.

6.5 Copyrights

All posters to the Wiki project must agree that they are the copyright owner of the digital material. All material assumes the site license.

6.5.1 GNU Free Documentation License (GNU FDL)

, commonly referred to as 'copyleft', is the site license for the Wikipedia project born out of the While providing strong protections for inclusion of text from the original author, the license is generally inconvenient for non–traditional media such as online content. USG does not recommend a specific copyright license.

6.5.2 Creative Commons

6.5.3 Digital Millennium Copyright Act Sec. 512.

> '(a) TRANSITORY DIGITAL NETWORK COMMUNICATIONS- A service provider shall not be liable for monetary relief, [...] for infringement of copyright by reason of the provider's transmitting, routing, or providing connections for, material through a system or network controlled or operated by or for the service provider [...] if–
>
> '(1) the transmission of the material was initiated by or at the direction of a person other than the service provider;

6.6 Project Commercialization

Marketplace forces match supply with demand. As wiki technology advances and becomes more prevalent, a commercial venture will capitalize on a general–purpose wiki installation

if Penn State were to decline the USG request.[9] We recommend Penn State act expediently before a commercial company executes the recommendations in this report.

A commercial venture lacks Access Account authorization, re-introducing anonymity and removing problematic pages from university intervention.

6.6.1 Example: For example, some faculty have expressed annoyance at anonymous and inaccurate postings on Ratemyprofessors.com.

6.6.2 Digital Security of university networks becomes jeopardized when students register for third–party services using the same userid/password as their Access Account. No guarantee of database safety is given for non–university servers, compared to encrypted transmissions and stringent management of university production services.

6.6.3 Example: Facebook.com has seen a spectacular rise in new student accounts. If the Penn State Facebook.com server were to be compromised, the information in tens of thousands of accounts could be released to the general public. A significant fraction of these accounts would contain the userid/password of students, rendering authentication for services protected by the Access Account ineffective. The Access Account is currently used to protect WebMail, eLion, and licensed software on downloads.its.psu.edu.

6.7 Policy Decisions

[Wiki is not a democracy]

[9] A commercial venture would likely be ad–supported or subscription–based.

7 Promotional Support

The largest promotional advantage of Wiki is word–of–mouth campaigns, initiated by press coverage.

7.1 Press Coverage

7.1.1 The Collegian published an article 5–October–2005 reporting on Academic Assembly support of Wiki. The last sentence reports ITS is collaborating with members of the University Board of Trustees, which is incorrect due to a miscommunication.

[End–of–semester article]

The Collegian also published a follow–up article mentioning Wiki 9–December–2005.

7.1.2 The Councillor newsletter of the Council of Commonwealth Student Governments published an article 19–November–2005 introducing and reporting the merits of the Wiki. The article also reported on a Wiki presentation by George Chriss during Academic Affairs Committee Meeting 21–October–2005. (Appendix G)

7.1.3 A HUB Poster has been prepared for display in the Hetzel Union Building. (Appendix H)

7.2 Project Template

7.2.1 Coordination Center While beyond the scope of this report, Penn State should consider implementing a university–hosted wiki collaborative exchange project for other interested universities.

7.2.2 Wikimedia Partnership There is limited direct support for university projects from the Foundation itself. While Penn State has infrastructure to do well, other universities are largely disconnected from our efforts. We are also receptive to new ideas,

but again open feedback is currently limited to the Penn State community. The Wikimedia Foundation is in need of unique talents (e.g. cross-linguistics), having Foundation support would be mutually beneficial as students gain exposure to wikis.

7.3 User Guides

7.3.1 New User Guide

7.3.2 Project Outline

7.4 Cost Estimation

Closing Comments

Most importantly the Penn State Wiki is an opportunity to improve public image and student satisfaction with an emphasis on effective communication. Penn State has always been an advocate of the exchange of free ideas, and the Wiki will ensure our community will be able to strive in challenging environments and circumstances, as one university.

Contributions & About the Author

Jim Leous was always welcoming in project discussions and as a guide to Penn State's internal infastructure. Robin Anderson, Lee Corar, Darryl Farber, Donald Leslie, Kevin Morooney, and Ed McGowan, Sam Richards, and Nathaniel Sheetz also offered valuable professional insights. All members of USG and CCSG have been curtious in opposition or enthusiastic in giving Wiki a proper reception. Nicole Belolan and Jay Shuchter participated in improvements to document style, editorial clarifications, and as objective peer–reviewers.

George Chriss is a senior receiving a degree in Science B.S., and is a student University Faculty Senator serving on the Computing and Information Systems committee. He also serves as chair of the Student Resources and Concerns Committee of USG Academic Assembly. Chriss is the former president of the Nittany Chemical Society and active member of the Penn State Glee Club.

In his spare time, Chriss enjoys working on his Linux laptop (affectionately named Basil), watching people interact (esp. in politics), and reading about research trends in modern science (esp. nanotechnology). He may be contacted by email at [email address] or in person running around campus.

Figure 10: In my room.

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Figure 11: Creative Commons identifiers.